

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COA-02 H-03 EB-11 INT-08 SS-20 NSC-10

IO-14 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 FMC-04 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 CG-00 DLOS-06 JUSE-00 EURE-00 PA-04 PRS-01

USIA-15 DRC-01 L-03 (ISO) W
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P R 291438Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7516

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SOFIA 0114

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIS, BU, US

SUBJECT: SEIZURE OF BULGARIAN FISHING VESSEL

REF: SOFIA 0110 (NOTAL) AND 0109; STATE 018141 AND 17627

1. FIRST DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TRAIKOV WHO HAD SUMMONED ME TO MFA, BEGAN PRESENTATION BY SAYING HE WISHED TO READ STATEMENT TO REGARDING US COAST GUARD SEIZURE OF BULGARIAN FISHING TRAWLER LIMOZA, ON JANUARY 26.

2. TRAIKOV FIRST EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR PROMPT NOTIFICATION TO BULGAR EMBASSY AND MFA OF SEIZURE BY DEPARTMENT AND EMBASSY RESPECTIVELY. GOB ALSO GRATEFUL THAT BULGARIAN OFFICIAL GIVEN PROMPT ACCESS TO CAPTAIN AND CREW. HOWEVER, TWO MEMBERS OF THE CREW ARE ILL, ONE SERIOUSLY AND THIS CAUSING GOB AND RELATIVES SERIOUS CONCERN RE SAFETY OF MEN ABOARD "LIMOZA".

3. STATED CIRCUMSTANCES AND REASONS SURROUNDING SEIZURE NOT CLEAR TO GOB. THEN REQUESTED THAT USG DO EVERYTHING IT CAN TO BRING CASE TO SPEEDY AND SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION.

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4. SENSATIONAL US PRESS AND TV COVERAGE BEING GIVEN INCIDENT PAINTS PICTURE WHICH DOES NOT REPRESENT FACTS OR REFLECT IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES, TRAIKOV SAID. ADDED THAT GOB HOPES THIS INCIDENT WILL NOT "DARKEN" RELATIONS JUST AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE ABOUT TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS, ARE PLANNING HIGH-LEVEL VISITS, PREPARED TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT AND TAKING OTHER STEPS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS.

5. FINALLY, TRAIKOV SAID THAT MFA WOULD BE REQUESTING VISAS FOR TWO LAWYERS WHO WILL BE SENT TO NEW YORK IN CONNECTION WITH THIS CASE AND REQUESTED THAT VISAS BE ISSUED PROMPTLY.

6. AFTER PROMISING TO REPORT STATEMENT TO DEPARTMENT, I ADDED THAT VESSEL WAS SEIZED BECAUSE IT WAS FISHING IN OUR FISHING ZONE. HE, TRAIKOV, COULD BE ASSURED THAT ILL MEN ABOARD "LIMOZA" WOULD BE GIVEN ALL NECESSARY MEDICAL ATTENTION. WE, LIKE BULGARS, HOPE INCIDENT WILL NOT AFFECT IMPROVING RELATIONS BUT MATTER IS BEFORE COURT WHICH UNDER PRESENT PLANS, WILL HEAR CASE ON FEBRUARY 5.

7. ON REQUEST FOR VISAS FOR LAWYERS, I ASSURED TRAIKOV THAT VISAS WILL BE ISSUED UPON RECEIPT OF REQUEST FROM MFA.

8. COMMENT: BELIEVE BULGARIANS STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO HANDLE INCIDENT AND ATTEMPTING TO KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE. SEEM TO BE NERVOUS ABOUT CREW PERHAPS BECAUSE OF FEAR OF DEFECTION OR OTHER UNPLEASANT INCIDENT WHILE VESSEL IN NEW YORK HARBOR. TRAIKOV'S COMMENTS ON DEVELOPING RELATIONS ETC., APPARENT WARNING THAT IF INCIDENT CONTINUES BE NEWS SENSATION OR COURT HITS BULGARS HARD BILATERAL RELATIONS WILL BE AFFECTED. BULGARS HAVE NOT RAISED QUESTION OF PENALTIES OR DAMAGES. BATJER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FISHING BOATS, TERRITORIAL WATERS VIOLATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SOFIA00114
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SOFIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974018/aaaaahif.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SOFIA 0110 (NOTAL) AND 0109; STATE 0, 18141 AND 17627
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 APR 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <10 JUN 2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SEIZURE OF BULGARIAN FISHING VESSEL
TAGS: EFIS, BU, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005